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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000067

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STATE FOR EUR/NCE

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TAGS: PREL KUNR UN IR EZ

SUBJECT: CZECH FM SVOBODA: CZECHS ARE COMMITTED PARTNERS ON UN REFORM; IRAN

REF: A. STATE 4746

1B. STATE 6236

1C. 2005 PRAGUE 1707

¶1. (C) Summary. Czech FM Cyril Svoboda warmly received Ambassador Cabaniss on January 23, 2006, and confirmed the Czechs are closely aligned with the U.S. on UN Human Rights Commission reform, UN management reform, and the need to report Iran to the UN Security Council. Other topics discussed included a recommendation to extend the Radio Free Europe (RFE) lease into 2008 (it presently expires 12/31/07) before the upcoming election, and FM Svoboda's views on the possible outcome of the election. End summary.

¶2. (U) Ambassador Cabaniss met with FM Cyril Svoboda January 23, 2006, to discuss UN reform and referral of Iran to the UNSC. Other MFA attendees included Jan Kara, Director of the UN Department; Ivana Grollova, UN Department; Jakub Skalnik, new Director of the Americas Department, and Veronika Stromsikova, Director of the Human Rights Department. Poloff attended as notetaker.

¶3. (C) On UN reform, FM Svoboda said the Czechs support the creation of a new UN Human Rights Council that will have "deep authority." He said the Czechs are studying the question of the proper selection criteria for new members, but agreed that at a minimum, applicants should be barred from membership if they have been sanctioned. (After the meeting, Grollova added that the Czechs agree the size of the council should be limited, perhaps to 30 to 40 members.) FM Svoboda also said the Czechs support U.S. policy on management reform, which he agrees will improve ethics and financial oversight. He hoped the UN reforms could be implemented prior to the arrival of the new Secretary General.

¶4. (C) On Iran, FM Svoboda said the Czechs support referral to the UNSC. Iran has clearly defied the international community, and referral is the only way to pressure Iran into compliance with IAEA obligations. In his view, the only problem with referral is the difficulty of harmonizing U.S. and EU positions with those of Russia and China.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador used the discussion on Iran to reiterate his concern about the visit to Prague of an Iranian parliamentary delegation in late 2005 (ref C). FM Svoboda admitted it was difficult for him to accept as well, but assured the Ambassador that Czech foreign policy will not change as long as he is foreign minister. However, he conceded that if, after the June elections, the Social Democrats (CSSD) form a minority government with Communist support, some changes would be possible.

¶6. (C) Turning briefly to the relocation of RFE/RL, FM Svoboda urged the Ambassador to ensure that a lease extension, from 12/31/07 into 2008, is finalized prior to the

election. He said the incoming government could have different priorities than the current government. (Note: in a December 2005 meeting, the Czech Finance Minister Sobotka told the Ambassador that he did not wish to bring this matter up before the election.)

¶7. (C) Comment. Talking to FM Svoboda about UN reform and nuclear non-proliferation is like preaching to the choir. The Czechs are committed and reliable partners on these issues.
CABANISS